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Dept Pass: Managua, Mexico, San Jose, San Salvador, Tegucigalpa,  
and USCINCSOUTH Quarry Heights CZ

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TAGS: PINS, SHUM, PORS, GT

FROM Amembassy GUATEMALA

DATE: December 28, 1977

SUBJECT: Monthly Report on Political Violence and Human Rights:  
November 1977

REF

SUMMARY: November was typical of recent months in terms of violence, with 22 incidents, for which we premise political inspiration, resulting in 17 deaths. Of significance was the restraint shown by the Guatemalan Government in the face of potentially disruptive labor demonstrations.

END SUMMARY

Government Sets Example. Two large labor demonstrations took place in Guatemala in November. Both were sponsored by CNUS, an uncertified labor confederation. The Government expressed its concern, and with respect to one of the demonstrations charged that there were subversive elements taking advantage of the workers to upset the electoral process. Although the Government threatened to take action against such unauthorized demonstrations, both protests were held without incident. Participants alleged police took note of demonstration leaders and organizers.

Other Developments. The EGP (Guerrilla Army of the Poor) acknowledged four political executions (three in November and one a year ago), according to stories carried in the press. Three took place in the San Juan Cotzel area of northern El Quiche, and one in the Tiquisate area of Escuintla.

The EGP unit in El Quiche called the attention of the press to the large numbers of unidentified and mutilated corpses -- allegedly eighty during September and October. It should be known, said the EGP, that sixty of these were workers and campesinos. It protested "unknown" assassins and kidnappers who dressed in olive green, pretending to be guerrillas

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(but in reality killing for the rich). The EGP threatened reprisals against those responsible for such acts unless they mend their ways.

The EGP cited one MLN (a favorite target) official they had executed a year ago who had failed to heed their warnings. This man, the EGP claimed, had been born a poor Indian but had come to put himself at the disposal of the rich and had housed soldiers responsible for killing many innocent campesinos who were falsely accused of being guerrillas.

The EGP, speaking as "victims" of the two local officials they had executed on November 7, said, "We poor campesinos hated (them)" because they were spies and took advantage of the helpless campesinos. "(They) failed to heed our warning," said the EGP, "and so we killed them."

Another EGP group operating in the Department of Escuintla staged an evangelizing raid where, according to the press, thirty guerrillas, some reportedly in olive green and others in police uniforms, visited three farms holding personnel at bay with weapons while preaching revolution, destroying property and equipment, and threatening the lives of plantation managers if they did not leave within a given time.

This group issued a bulletin to the press claiming responsibility for the execution of a local MLN official alleged by them to have organized gangs to help the Army carry out repression against the people.

A bomb was exploded in the building housing the offices of the Urban Bus Owners Association. It caused extensive damage but no personal injuries. A heretofore unnamed organization (Committee for Self Defense of the Worker - CAO) claimed credit, alleging bus drivers had been fired unjustly.

Another report from El Quiche of the kidnapping of a campesino by five armed men. The victim later returned to his home badly beaten but able to identify his captors to the local campesino league. As one of the captors supposedly was a comisionado militar (an unpaid delegate of the military establishment in rural areas, who serves traditionally as recruiter and informer), the National Workers Confederation (CNT) complained to the Ministry of Defense, stating that this was not the first time this had happened. Earlier victims

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included workers, campesinos and students, the CNT charged.

A San Carlos University student, Jose Luis PERDOMO, was granted safe conduct to Mexico. He had expressed fear for his life in view of the killing of two student leaders earlier this year.

Statistics. Of the 18 deaths, three were in eastern Guatemala, four in the capital, six in the Pacific lowland, two in the Indian highlands, and three in Izabal, providing a wider distribution than was shown in October. The incidents remained overwhelmingly rural. In at least one instance a body which turned up in Guatemala City was suspected of originating elsewhere. The EGP claimed four bodies as its handiwork (one from last year), and the murder of an alleged leader of the old FAR (Miguel GODOY) and the wounding of his son are suspected by police to be reprisals for defection. Some secondary student leaders in the southwest alleged threats by the Anti-communist Secret Army (of questionable existence).

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